



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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NORTHERN ARIZONA MAN CONVICTED IN RAPE AND MURDER OF MISSING WOMAN

PHOENIX - Branden Pete, 20, of Greasewood, Ariz., was found guilty by a federal jury in Prescott, Ariz. this week on seven counts related to the murder and rape of Charlotte Jane Brown who was 38 at the time of her death. The jury's decision included guilty verdicts for Second Degree Murder, Felony Murder in the Course of Kidnaping, Kidnaping, Felony Murder in the Course of Aggravated Sexual Abuse, Aggravated Sexual Abuse, Aggravated Sexual Abuse Resulting in Death and Conspiracy to Commit Murder. The case was tried before United States District Court Judge Robert C. Broomfield from October 25-31, 2005. The defendant is in federal custody pending sentencing which is set before Judge Broomfield on January 23, 2006 at 10:00 a.m.

U.S. Attorney Paul K. Charlton stated of the verdict that "This is a just decision based on the heinous nature of this crime. I applaud the jury for arriving at this verdict."

During the trial, evidence showed that on May 18, 2002, Pete, Irvin Cepi, and Hoskie and Harris James, father and son respectively, picked up Charlotte Jane Brown while she was hitchhiking close to her home in Steamboat, Ariz. on the Navajo Reservation. Brown was driven to a remote location where she was restrained and forcibly raped by Pete, who was 16 years old at the time of the incident, and his co-defendants.

Following the rape, Brown was forced back into the car and driven a few miles away to a remote location in the woods northeast of Jeddito, Ariz. As they drove to the second location, the four plotted to kill Brown to prevent her from reporting them for the rape. Cepi killed Brown by smashing a large rock upon the right side of her head while she pleaded with him for her life. After Cepi struck the victim, Pete threw a rock at the victim, also striking her in the head. After she had been killed, Cepi and Pete entombed Brown's remains under some rocks in a nearby wash. They returned home and later burned her clothing.

Brown's partial remains, scattered and scavenged by predators, were discovered months later on August 26, 2002. In the intervening months after her disappearance, Brown's family had extensively posted "missing person" flyers in the area and a criminal investigation had commenced at the direction of the FBI and the Navajo Nation Department of Law Enforcement. An anonymous tip led authorities to the four defendants who all confessed their involvement. Cepi was convicted at trial in February 2004 and was sentenced on May 24, 2004 to seven concurrent life sentences. Hoskie and Harris James are pending sentencing based on previous plea agreements.

A conviction for each of these crimes carries a maximum penalty of life in prison, a \$250,000 fine or both. In determining an actual sentence, Judge Broomfield will consult the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, which provide appropriate sentencing ranges. The judge, however, is not bound by those guidelines in determining a sentence. The prosecution was handled by Vincent Q. Kirby, Assistant U.S. Attorney, District of Arizona, Phoenix.

CASE NUMBER: CR-03-355-PCT-RCB
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